

The future of Cyprus: the problem of Jewish immigration to England and the United States solved by furthering Jewish colonisation of Cyprus

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THE FUTURE OF CYPRUS

THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH IMMIGRATION
TO ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES
SOLVED BY FURTHERING
JEWISH COLONISATION OF CYPRUS



N.D.
[1900].

THE FUTURE OF CYPRUS.

When, in 1878, England took possession of Cyprus this step gave rise to the highest expectations from all sides.

It was the main object of that great statesman Benjamin d'Israeli, to show in Cyprus, what English administration could make out of a country that only too long had suffered from Turkish misrule.

Twenty years, and a little more than that already, have passed, and what has been achieved in this space of time? Has Cyprus become, as it was claimed that it would, an example of administrative wisdom to be copied by the government of every Oriental province? Is Cyprus now regarded as a profitable acquisition by the British public, and, finally, are the people of the island satisfied with the advantages derived from their change of masters?

Unhappily, these questions cannot be answered in a very satisfactory way.

There have been no fundamental changes in the modes of government to be copied by others, the British public grumble whenever they hear of the yearly sums, granted in aid of Cyprus by Parliament, and the few progressive elements of the native population are somewhat disappointed. They readily acknowledge that oppression and injustice have vanished since the English took possession of the island, but very little has been attained besides this, and so much had been expected.

If you inquire into the reasons of this astonishing failure, you will find them to be of very many kinds. First, it is claimed that the high tribute payable to the Sultan (£ 92,000) is far beyond the capacity of the country, and a positive hindrance to improvements upon the present state of things. But this is a difficulty which it is impossible now to overcome. (The amount of this tribute is all the more unbearable, as, soon after it was agreed upon — and the committee appointed for this agreement is generally regarded as having made some mistake or other — the Sultan closed the Turkish ports against the Cyprian salt, which had netted him, as a government monopoly, £ 40,000, an amount which certainly had played an important part in fixing the sum of tribute. —

Another important reason is the backwardness of the native population to whom it was left to decide, to a certain extent, the destinies of the country. A striking illustration

of this is, that soon after the English occupation it was thought wise to have a railway built between Nicosia, the capital, and Larnaca, the principal port of the island. The complete material for this railroad-connection was even offered for nothing by a friendly act of the Egyptian authorities. But the council of Cyprus (which consists of 6 Englishmen and 12 natives) simply rejected this offer, because — a railway would spoil the trade of the muleteers. Now, this backwardness of the natives could have been made up for by the energy and thrift of the new element that was sure to come in the wake of the little army of occupation, but, curiously enough, this new element never came. There was a feeling of uncertainty prevailing in many quarters with regard to the permanency of the English tenure of the Island. The giving over of Corfu to the Greeks was, in some degree, responsible for the nearly general sentiment, that Cyprus would not very long remain an English possession. This excluded British settlers as well as capital. Besides, the few newcomers met with a then necessary but not less harmful measure refusing them the right of buying land before a 5 years' stay in the island. This was a Turkish law which the English had to refer to in order to undo certain Turkish transactions¹⁾. Furthermore, the little army of occupation was so badly provided for with the necessities for a hot climate that sickness ensued, and Cyprus became reputed as an insalubrious country.

All these reasons combined and others, too many to mention, tended to check every progressive development at the time when Cyprus was the centre of interest, and since that period the island has been very little heard of.

As it is now, nearly all the difficulties in the way of the country's welfare are removed. The permanency of the English tenure of Cyprus is now generally regarded as absolutely certain, foreigners are no more prohibited from buying land, the climate has proved to be better than the climates of all other English colonies.²⁾

¹⁾ The Sultan who by the treaty of San Stefano was to retain the sovereignty over the island and who should also receive his revenues in the form of the tribute, tried, besides this, to become the private owner of some important lands. It was against him then, that the English had to make use of the Turkish law, which was easy enough, as the emissaries of the Sultan had come to Cyprus from Constantinople for the sole purpose of buying the lands. The closing of the Turkish ports against the Cyprian salt of which we have already spoken, was the Sultan's answer to this measure.

²⁾ I may quote from the „Saturday Review“ (upon the subject of Mediterranean Winter Resorts): „We wonder when Cyprus will figure among them. We hear on good authority that the island is well adapted to become a tourist centre.“

But all these improvements coming slowly and hesitatingly to the knowledge of the world will not tend to bring about a radical change any more. All that is hoped for now is a very, very slow development by many small steps, such as have been noted even in the last period of the much commented „Turkish Misrule“.

THE REMEDY.

There is a way of bringing about a rapid and radical change. It is by bringing to Cyprus a new element of population. It is the only remedy. It is possible. It can be done to-day.

There is a remarkable unanimity among the writers upon the subject that the present population is not able, even under the best government, to develop the truly grand resources of the island otherwise than in the very slowest way possible. The island has a population now of something over 230.000 — there could easily be four times as many.¹⁾ Only a very small part of the area is under regular cultivation, and the manner of cultivation is even to this day much the same as it was on the banks of the Nile fully 3000 years ago. Nor even is the vast amount of uncultivated land of inferior quality.

On the contrary. The very best lands in the plains, the vegetable soil of which reaches, in many parts, to 10 and 20 feet in depth, were deserted on account of their accessibility in former centuries to the pirates and later on to the Turkish tax-collectors.

It is therefore evident that the present population would not be harmed by the introduction of a new element, be it even ever so large. The Cypriots would rather have the most substantial share in the new boom of their country; their taxes would be less severely felt, their products would largely increase in value, and they would, to a goodly extent, reap their benefits from such an immigration.

And now, — is there a desirable element available to do all this and to renew the old prosperity of the land? Just such a one exists — it is the Jews. And we may safely say, judging from the failures of different experiments that no other immigration than Jewish is possible.

The vast majority of this people are living, at the present time, under the most shameful conditions which constantly cause them to emigrate from the countries of Eastern Europe.

1) The isle of Samos has more than 100 inhabitants to the km, while Cyprus has only some 25. Samos is also dependent upon her agricultural resources. — Sicily has some 135 to the km.

We need not dwell here upon the subject at length; — enough to say that their arrival in large numbers has, even in the foremost countries of the world, aroused against them a feeling which can in no better way be accounted for than by the supposition of an inborn hatred, and let us assume, by the new wave of nationalism in which the cosmopolitan feeling of the last generations has been drowned.

The bad welcome the Jews are receiving from all sides cannot stop their emigration, because it rather increases than lessens their tortures in their old homes.

There would be a way out of the difficulty if the stream of the wandering Jews could be diverted into a country where it would not encounter a solid nationality. This could, at least for some time, prevent their flowing to lands where their increasing numbers are becoming a practical danger.¹⁾

We may well assume, that after an interval of let us say 20 years, the recently immigrated Jews may have proved their usefulness as citizens in every land, even to the most unwilling eye, or other changes may have taken place to do away with the difficulty.

A country which should meet the above requirements could not, reasonably, be sought for anywhere but in the peaceful parts of the Orient with its conglomeration of races, nations and sects.

The Jews themselves, are beginning to awaken to this situation. The Jewish Colonisation Association and other Jewish Societies have given up, mostly, their ideas about Argentine and similar enterprises, and are concentrating their efforts upon these regions. We have also lately seen arise the Zionist movement which tends to bring the chosen people back to the promised land. But this movement is to-day only a hope to realize which very many obstacles have to be overcome while in the case of Cyprus only the good will of the English government is concerned.

Their attention already directed to the Orient, the Jews will all the more gladly accept an English encouragement, as the immigration of Jews to Syria and Palestine is at present prohibited, and besides this — even if Zionism should soon succeed — Palestine would be too

¹⁾ I find the following remarks by Arnold White in „Harpers Weekly“: „It is not difficult to perceive that a new problem in the „great cities is arising which, though it is does not yet clamor for „solution, will be solved by other means than legislation in an „over-populated country like England unless the Government and „the anglicized Jewish community can come to some reasonable „agreement in the matter.“ These words I consider to be all the more weighty, as they come from a man who highly admires the Jewish race for its high Standard of morality and intelligence (vide XIX. Century. May 92).

small a country¹⁾ to shelter a very large number of them. Furthermore — there are many reasons which make an English possession preferable to a Turkish province.

I do not think, I shall have to waste much time and space on the desirability of having Jews in Cyprus from an English point of view. The resources of the Island, are unquestionable. Horticulture, requiring much more intelligence than sheer force, is an occupation to which the Jews do incline, and this branch of agriculture will doubtlessly be soon one of the principal features of Cyprus. About the commercial and industrial possibilities of the country we need not, in connection with the Jews, waste any words. Sir Charles Wilson in a recent²⁾ report before the Palestine Exploration-Fund mentioned, that nothing had surprised him so much as the changed aspect of Palestine since the establishment of Jewish colonies there. Safety now prevails and the agricultural operations are showing the truth of the Bible-statements with regard to the fertility of the soil, which up to now had to be taken for granted.

Both the agricultural and commercial importance of Cyprus in the past was also very different from its present state.

It is more than possible, for example, that Famagusta again should become the peer of Beyrouth and be to the English trade what Beyrouth is to the French.

What, then, is necessary to do in the matter? — Very little indeed! — I have but a few suggestions to make the acceptance of which would have the results wished for.

The government should invite immigration to Cyprus (immigration in general, if it wants to, even without mentioning the Jews), and should give the immigrants a few slight advantages over the privileges they would even now enjoy:

1. The newcomers should be protected against a rise in the price of lands and other necessities in so far as such a rise would only be occasioned by the fact of the new immigration. This could probably be done by an official survey of the lands now occupied by the natives or by application of similar measures.

¹⁾ Palestine has about 25 000 to 29 000 \square kms. According to the above we may reasonably calculate that the country could accommodate a population of about $2\frac{3}{4}$ millions. (This would be 100 inhabitants per \square km). As the present population is about 600 000 we may assume that only about two millions of people could go there within, perhaps, twenty years. The Jewish nation counts, at present, about 10 to 12 millions of which number not even 1% are living really free from persecution or restraint in one form or another; — while of at least three quarters of the whole number of Jews it can safely be said that they have to suffer intolerably — as Jews

²⁾ The "Future of Cyprus" was written in 1899.

2. Under the present rules, foreigners have all the rights of citizens after 5 years' stay in the country — that is, if they pay a groundtax. This limit could well be reduced provided a certain knowledge of the English language be possessed. Autonomy of the smaller communities need not be demanded, as a reasonable autonomy of such is even now customary in the island.

3. The immigrants should, to an encouraging degree, be employed at any works (roads, waterworks etc.) executed by the government so as to facilitate a larger immigration at the beginning.¹⁾

Further details are unnecessary. If the government adopts the idea, there is no doubt, that it will do all and everything that could reasonably be expected, to make it a success, and that there would be a success may well be regarded as out of the question.

Still, there may be many to whom Cyprus is a very remote and a very insignificant part of the British Empire for which it is not worth while to take extraordinary measures. To these, then, let me show the greatness of the thing.

We have already touched upon England's obligation to do what she was expected to do for Cyprus and for the Orient, and we have also seen that this project means, if we only care to look at it from this point of view, a practical solution of the Jewish question of to-day.

Now it has been said over and over again that Europe has to deal with her Jews as a whole, but I do not think that any British statesman would have regarded this as the only way to settle this truly European question, if he could have perceived this solution which England alone could bring about for all Europe to her everlasting glory — and to her own benefit.

Speaking in this connection of England's everlasting glory, it may not be quite out of place here, to hint at the possibilities arising from the unsettled state of the Jewish question. England herself is very near a dangerous turning-point of the road. England, for centuries past the asylum of the persecuted is to-day very near giving

1) The construction of the harbour of Famagusta and of the railway between Nicosia and that port offer ample opportunity just now (besides the public works referred to above) for the employment even of unskilled labourers.

It should be mentioned, here, too, that even from a Cypriote point of view foreign labourers and especially such as intend to settle finally as colonists — ought to be preferred to Cypriotes, as the employment of Cypriote labour for public works, would make itself felt in a decrease (instead of an increase) of the crops.

up the long cherished tradition by closing her doors against the „alien pauper“. In very much the same position are the United States, all of which shows that this English solution of the question will, in the first place, benefit England herself and the United States, the two great nations of the Anglo-Saxon race.

But this is not the best argument in favor of the plan.

It is yet in everybody's memory, what reasons led to the founding of the Khartum college. Natives of the Soudan should receive there as thorough an English education as possible (leaving their faith undisturbed) and in but a little while to come — so it was claimed — the consequences would be felt throughout Africa, and would help in the building up of the British Empire more than battles won and countries conquered.

The thought is full of beauty and wisdom, and it is verily a rare pleasure to let the mind follow the possibilities arising from such a peaceful institution. It is an enchanting dream to think that, already in the near future, the teaching of science will supplant war and that artist and scholar will go and succeed where the missionary of our days had been and failed. — But let us now come to the matter-of-fact chances of the Khartum college and I think that everybody will be much satisfied if this institution will be attended, in let us say 20 years, by about 1000 young muslims. You may find the time limit long or short and the number high or low, but I ask you, is it not just as possible that in the same time Cyprus will be inhabited by one million of prosperous people, all having a fair English education? — — — which would, by the numbers, be just exactly a thousand times more than we expected, a minute ago, from the Khartum college. — Besides, the Jew, in intelligence, in love of learning and energy is regarded as inferior to no other nation existing, with certainly no exception in favor of the Soudanese. It is also clear that the English Jew from Cyprus will sooner penetrate, in pursuit of his trade or other vocation, into the innermost parts of the dark continent, than the student from Khartum, notwithstanding the greater distance.

Nor is it the Jews from Eastern Europe alone who will come to Cyprus. Wherever the Jews will be prosecuted — in Persia, in Greece, in Yemen, in Algier and in Morocco — their eyes will turn to the fair island in the Mediterranean, where there are no enemies to fear, where a wise government will protect their lives, and where they can peacefully enjoy the fruits of their labour. And be it even true that these Jews do not show the same mental qualities as their European brothers, they are sure to make up for this by their better physical development. And it is by no means a vague

dream that the different types of Jews brought together again from all parts will form again the old type of their nation, noble in body and mind, from which sprang the kings and prophets.

It is also an established fact that the immigrants always remain in some contact with the countries they come from, and so there is no doubt that the influence of British Cyprus will immediately be felt from the Persian Gulf to the straits of Gibraltar and from Aden to the Black Sea.

But this is not yet all.

England is in possession of a vast number of countries, great and small, scattered all over the face of the globe — but for this immense area of land, inhabited by hundreds of millions she has some forty millions of English souls, only a few of which are available, — outside of the mother-country, — for the purposes of the Empire.

Under these circumstances, it seems to me that another India cannot be of such value to England as the conquest, if I may call it so, of a new nation of such a progressive character.

Cyprus, by its unique position will then become the most important advance post of England, a second centre of British influence.

There is no doubt as to the loyalty of the Jewish subjects to the English crown, and we can safely say that the new settlers will show the same qualities. — Cyprus, inhabited by a large number of Jews, will again play an important role in these parts of the Orient and will, then, truly be an important English possession.

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